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A REJOINDER TO ARCHBISHOP IRELAND.

BY REV. S. M. VERNON, D.D.

THE reply which I had the honor of making to Archbishop Ireland, in the August number of this REVIEW, calls forth this, among other things, in His Grace's rejoinder: "Dr. Vernon leaps into the arena a free lance, unsummoned and unauthorized by the Board of Bishops." The facts are, that I waited till the last available moment before acting upon the invitation to reply, and only when assured that no one else had undertaken the task and there were only four days left for writing did I enter the field. It seemed to me proper that I should speak, as my brother, Rev. Leroy M. Vernon, D.D., was the founder and for seventeen years the superintendent of the Italian mission; loyalty to him required, now that he is gone, that I should vindicate the integrity of the work he established. I am glad to say that in the Methodist Church we enjoy a personal freedom of speech that does not require us to be "summoned or authorized" by a bishop before we may express our minds.

His Grace complains, in the September number, that I did not answer the charges he made in his former article. I did make sufficient answer by showing that for various reasons his charges were unworthy of serious consideration. First, by showing that his principal witness, Dr. Stackpole, was a spurious Methodist authority and unworthy of credence. When Dr. Stackpole was ruled out of court all the charges based on his testimony, by inexorable logic, fell with this "house built upon the sand." I was not bound to consider any of the charges in detail that had been swept out of court by wholesale. A second reason was the gossipy and trivial character of the charges. He may not consider it beneath his dignity to make them, but I considered it beneath mine to notice them. For example, he charges certain

Methodist pastors with "padding" their statistics for the purpose of making a good showing of numbers. There is only one way of knowing that to be true: that is to examine the church records in these charges and compare them with the published statistics. This Archbishop Ireland did not do, and he published what he did not and could not know to be true. I omitted to state this before partly because I did not wish to put a venerable prelate of the Church in that awkward position, and partly because I believe that the intelligent readers of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW would see the gossipy and unreal character of these vague accusations without any remarks about them.

A third reason was that there was such a manifest warping and twisting of facts that it was better to leave them in their own nakedness, as monuments of the folly of their author and as evidence of the great straits to which he was put in making out a case against the Methodists in Italy. As where he charges one Methodist pastor with inviting a neighboring congregation to attend services in his church on the occasion of the visit of the presiding elder. That was a very natural thing to do, very like what occurs in every Christian community. If a distinguished minister is to preach in any particular church, notice of the fact is sent to the neighboring churches and to the public press with an invitation to everybody to attend. Often one church suspends services and goes to visit a neighboring church on a special occasion. It remained for an Archbishop to make the accusation, which he cannot prove, that in the case cited it was done for the purpose of giving the presiding elder a false impression of the strength of the congregation. It would be a very dull presiding elder who would not know that the people and pastor from the neighboring church were not members of that congregation, or who would not appreciate their courtesy in being present on the occasion of his visit.

A fourth reason was that his charges were not in form to admit of disproof, nor were they supported by any evidence requiring it. In all court proceedings, and in logical order, we first have the name of the accused, the words or acts complained of, then the time and place where the offence was committed. His Grace says he read in a Florence newspaper an offensive list of titles of books displayed in the window of the Methodist bookstore in Rome and asks us to accept that as evidence. He says

the Methodists "slander" the Pope, but he names no man who does it, nor the words of slander, nor the time or place. He asks me to disprove a charge of slander before he has named the slander or given any proof that it exists. He charges me with being "funny," and indeed I am in a very funny mood now, and am strongly tempted to give it expression and to call upon the whole civilized world to laugh at this most grotesque spectacle with a reputed thinker and scholar as its chief actor.

A fifth reason was that there is not a single definite, tangible charge made. It is a tirade instead of an indictment, an old woman's angry scolding rather than a clear thinker's comprehensive, accurate statement. He says, among other things, of our consecrated laborers in Italy that they are in "avowed alliance with lawbreakers and anarchists." I challenge the attention of the civilized world to this attitude of the Roman Catholic Church as represented by one of its most honored prelates toward a heroic band of educated, self-denying and liberty-loving Christian workers seeking the moral and spiritual improvement of a people in whom religious faith has been wounded almost to the death by the nameless wrongs of a corrupt, outgrown and oppressive ecclesiasticism. Will I deny the charge? No! I scorn it!

The Archbishop is not quite fair in dealing with my remarks about the Catholic priests in Italy who offered to enter our ministry for the larger compensation in prospect. I did not say, nor did I give him grounds to infer, that I meant priests who had been expelled from or had voluntarily left the Roman Catholic Church. They were priests in good standing, engaged in the regular duties of priests in the Roman Catholic Church, who, when rejected by our superintendent because their motives were transparent, went back to their duties in the priesthood of that Church, its unwilling servants. The low plane of the moral life of the priests in Italy was a fact I alleged justifying our presence there. From Italy that condition extends in a greater or less degree throughout all lands where that Church exists, entailing upon many lands that most demoralizing influence of a corrupt priesthood. I can find you an Archbishop in the southern part of this continent who is president of an international lottery company, the business of which is about as disreputable as anything the gambling world can show. Not long since in the city of Philadelphia a great Roman Catholic Church

lottery scheme was projected, and an official of the city Government which is not often accused of being over-conscientious, stepped in and stopped the lawbreaking and demoralizing enterprise. It was not a few discharged priests I was speaking of, but a world-wide low moral plane, having its origin and source in Italy. Alas! my brother, in speaking of these things, I am not taking comfort to myself, as you charge, thinking I "have imprinted a few black marks on the face of Catholicism"; somebody else imprinted them there; I have only called attention to them and recommended a thorough washing. God knows, my brother, it would be the joy of my life if I could paint that great Church: "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," coming up out of the wilderness where she has long wandered "leaning upon the arm of her beloved."

I will not burden these pages with another word about the non-use of the Bible and the rarity of Gospel-preaching in Italy, for the habit of the Roman Catholic Church in regard to these things is well known among intelligent people. Neither do I care to enlarge upon the prevalent scepticism in Italy due to the corruptions of the Church further than to cite one illustration of it. On a recent Sabbath afternoon fifty thousand people assembled in Rome about the statue of Giordino Bruno and shouted to the echo their approval of an address of which this is a characteristic passage:

"We are here to-day to honor the memory of Giordino Bruno, the martyr. The Roman Catholic Church burned him, thinking thereby she could destroy the aspirations of the people for free thought. We must again renew our vows to fight to the death this Church, synonymous with reaction and tyranny. Atheism is the only power that will enable us to win the battle in which we are engaged."

This is one among many evidences of the loss of faith among the people and of its cause, which justifies the presence of a progressive, free and evangelizing Church in that most needy field.

The Archbishop says truly that "there is no State Church in America" and seems to imply that the American flag floating over our mission property is designed to give the Italians the impression that the Methodist is the American Church or that it may be a step in that direction. It is true that there is one Church in America that believes in the union of Church and

State and in the right of the Church to dominate the State, and it has approached that condition as nearly as public opinion will allow. It has withdrawn many of its children from the schools of the Republic, and they are being educated by a foreign cult in such studies and principles as it thinks proper. It is, by such influences as it brings to bear upon self-seeking politicians and venal legislators, obtaining large State appropriations for the support of its sectarian institutions in violation of the spirit of the Constitution of the United States and of the letter of the State constitutions. In the State of Pennsylvania, as well as in other States, it obtains hundreds of thousands of dollars every year for the support of its institutions in open violation of the constitution of the State, while the Methodist and other Protestant Churches refuse to accept any State money.

His Grace complains that Methodists in Italy antagonize the Pope and co-operate with those who are opposed to his pretensions. It is certainly not new to the Archbishop that there is a necessary and eternal antagonism between the fundamental principles of Methodism and the Papacy. The one stands for individualism, the other for paternalism, and these are contrary the one to the other. The key-note of modern civilization and progress is individualism, the discovery of the individual man, granting him liberty, investing him with responsibility, giving him the rights of a free conscience, empowering him with the franchise, and holding him accountable directly to God. This idea has advanced from the days of Luther and Wesley, knocking at all the doors of despotism, menacing the thrones of absolutism, breaking the fetters of the Dark Ages, casting off the archaic superstitions of an outgrown mediævalism, pulling down the unauthorized pretensions of civil and ecclesiastical rulers, and it has bidden man to go in his native freedom, as the birds in the heavens, doing God's will and remembering his accountability to Him. This is the ideal life, often abused I grant, but by it men have grown good, strong and great; in business, in politics and in ecclesiastical matters this idea is pregnant. Cast-iron Russia has been compelled to accept it; even the Turk has fallen in with the procession; France has risen in its might and thrown off the fetters that threatened its very life; poor belated and long-deceived Spain is awaking and struggling to be free from the Octopus that has been sucking out its life; sleepy little Portugal

is rubbing its eyes and asking that the light of this new day may shine on it also; and even rock-ribbed old Austria is beginning to stir itself with aspirations for the new life that is coming into the world. One man on the banks of the Tiber stands for the old absolutism and paternalism, and he is compelled to sit there moping as a self-styled "prisoner" because the nations of the earth have repudiated his idea and him with it. Of course the presence of Methodism in Italy has the aspect of opposition to the Pope, for it stands for the new and better life of the world, for the right of every man to read God's word, to get out of it his own meaning with the aid of such teachers as he wishes to consult, to make his own confessions and prayers to God without any intervening priest, to make his reconciliation with God and obtain absolution from Him who only has power to forgive sins, and to associate himself with such Church relations as promise him greatest spiritual help.

The old paternalism when pure had its mission in the infantile stage of development and intelligence, and there may be people who still need its service, but the race is rapidly moving away from it. There is not a virile, progressive nation on earth that has not or is not striving to cast it out of government and school; even Italy is a Protestant nation in many elements. Since Victor Emmanuel marched into Rome the feeble, broken, dishonored parts of the grand old race have come together into a splendid national life under the control of a liberal, patriotic Parliament and an enlightened King, and the Italian in any land may speak with just pride of the great nation that has Rome for its capital.

I hope the logic of this article will appear even to Archbishop Ireland. The conduct of the Methodists in Italy is the question, but to understand that we must know the conditions back of them, their world-wide connections and the issues to which they lead. I have the example of Jesus for the method of reasoning I have adopted. He said: "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" If I have been a little insistent in naming and defining the beams, it is because I know the skill of our friends on the other side in covering up and concealing ugly facts when they wish to bring a railing accusation against their neighbors.

S. M. VERNON.